Knowledge and Beauty in Classical Islam

This volume offers an aesthetic reading of the *Muqaddima* by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), a text that has been studied up to the present as a work on historiography. It argues that the *Muqaddima* is also a comprehensive treatise on classical Arab-Islamic culture and provides a picture of classical Arab-Islamic aesthetics in its totality.

The theme of the book is the intrinsic connection between beauty and knowledge in the *Muqaddima*. Whenever Ibn Khaldūn deals with the problem of knowledge and science, he also deals with the problem of sensual beauty as an instrument or an obstacle to attain it. Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy of history is necessarily also an aesthetics of history. His key-notion of 'group feeling', the physical, ethic and aesthetic virtue of Bedouin societies, is at once the origin of the ascent of centralised States and the cause of their ruin. It represents a tragic contradiction that applies to the history of the Maghreb but then takes a universal value. It reflects a range of other contradictions inherent to the 'system' of classical Arab-Islamic aesthetics. These contradictions undermine the aesthetic system of the *Muqaddima* from within and provide decisive elements for the emergence of modern aesthetics.

Offering a comparative approach, the volume is a key resource to scholars and students interested in Arabic and Islamic studies, philosophy, aesthetics and global history.

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Knowledge and Beauty in Classical Islam

An Aesthetic Reading of the *Muqaddima* by Ibn Khaldūn

Giovanna Lelli

Contents

Acknowledgement

Preface[1]
The rationale and aims of the book

In the Muslim civilisation, unlike the ancient Greeks, the theatre did not occupy the position of a cultural institution. Only folk theatre was represented. This is one of the reasons why Averroes, the great commentator on Aristotle, in his commentary on the Aristotelian *Poetics* (based, moreover, on an Arabic translation from the Syriac), rendered 'tragedy' as 'panegyric' (*madīḥ*) and 'comedy' as 'satire' (*hijā*'), thereby transforming the Aristotelian text into a treatise on Arabic poetics.[2] It was this that inspired Jorge Luis Borges' gloomy and unappealing portrait of Averroes, whom he makes vanish, all of a sudden, as if struck by a blaze without light, when faced with the text of the Aristotelian *Poetics* as if he were on the edge of an abyss.[3] But would it be correct to say that the Muslims of the classical and pre-modern age (eight–eighteenth century) had no knowledge of the tragic, understood as man's profound awareness of facing an irresolvable and painful conflict and thus did not produce aesthetic works that were similar in their function to Greek tragedy? I am convinced that quite the reverse is true.

Indeed, a magnificent example of tragedy is the *Muqaddima* by Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), a much renowned text of Arabic historiography that we shall analyse in this book. The *Muqaddima* presents us with a profoundly tragic picture of the history of human civilisation (*al-ʿumrān al-basharī*). Civilisations, in their primitive, nomadic phase are vigorous and strong, with a rude simplicity and beauty which is at once unconscious and ingenuous. However, they transform naturally and inexorably into settlements and cities until they become crystallised in State organisations, which are initially characterised by their prosperity and a flowering of the arts and sciences. Their peak is their maturity but also the beginning of their decline, according to a mechanism which neither God nor man can do anything to change.

The book known by the name *Muqaddima* ('Prolegomena', 'Introduction') includes the real introduction and the first book of the three-volume work by the Arab historian Ibn Khaldūn, a work that is usually known by its abbreviated title of *Book of Examples* (*Kitāb al-ʿibar*).[4] Thus, the first book in the *Muqaddima*, is subdivided into six chapters: I 'Human Civilisation in General'; II 'Bedouin Civilisation, Savage Nations and Tribes and

their Conditions; III 'On States, Political Authority, the Caliphate, Government Ranks'; IV 'Countries and Cities, and all Other Kinds of Sedentary Civilisation'; V 'The Different Aspects of Making a Living, such as Profit and the Crafts'; and VI 'The Different Kinds of Sciences and the Methods of Education'.[5]

Unlike other great classics of Muslim thought, the *Muqaddima* was only translated into a Western language in the nineteenth century.[6] The *Muqaddima* has been greatly appreciated by scholars all over the world for the modern method of historiography that it uses. Ibn Khaldūn is well aware of the novelty and the value of his historiographic method, which is both rational and empirical. He refuses to accept historical information on face value, without critical scrutiny, even when it comes from sources that are considered authoritative (*nāqilūna*, the transmitters). He sets out to identify the internal causes of historical events by analysing them exclusively in the light of their context (*aḥwāl*, conditions, situation, circumstances), be it political, economic or social. His intention is to grasp the historical truth, the reason and the manner in which civilisations arise, develop and, ultimately and inevitably, decline and disappear, only to return to their nomadic state or be replaced by other young and vigorous civilisations. The analysis of Ibn Khaldūn focuses principally on the history of the Maghreb, which he considers both in the light of its specific characteristics (the dialectal relationship between the Bedouin tribal society and the formation of a centralised State) and in the light of its general characteristics which are common to the history of all human civilisations.

Without taking anything away from the valuable reading of the *Muqaddima* which displays a historical materialism *ante litteram*,[7] this study aims to reveal the extraordinary aesthetic vision of history which it contains. The possibility of proposing new readings of the *Muqaddima* is further proof of the continuing modernity of this great classic, which never ceases to invite reflection on both the past and the present of Arab civilisation and of human civilisation as a whole. To be more precise, the intention here is not only to propose an aesthetic reading but also, at the same time, an epistemological reading of the *Muqaddima*. The main objective is therefore to bring to light the profound relationship between knowledge and beauty in the Arab-Islamic civilisation as seen by Ibn Khaldūn. The reader will notice that in this book the word 'knowledge' occurs alternately with the words 'learning' and 'science'. Their Arabic correspondent in the *Muqaddima* is '*'ilm*', which occupies the comprehensive semantic field of archaic English 'science', indicating at once *knowledge*, the *pursuit of knowledge* and the different *branches of it*.

We are aware that an exhaustive reflection on Ibn Khaldūn's aesthetics should examine his complete works, including the whole *Kitāb al-'ibar*, his autobiography (*al-Ta'rīf* [8]), his poems, his work on logic ('*Allaqa li al-sulṭān*), his work on Sufism (*Shifā' al-sā'il*) and his work on theology

(*Lubāb al-muḥaṣṣal fī uṣūl al-dīn*).[9] However, the purpose of this book is limited to the analysis of the *Muqaddima*.

To our knowledge, most of the existing literature on the *Muqaddima* has not paid due attention to the possibility of an overall aesthetic reading of the work, nor has it considered the profound relationship that it reveals between knowledge and beauty. Several publications on the aesthetics of Islam refer to the *Muqaddima* for the information and opinions it contains on the arts. Among these studies, I would like to mention those I have drawn on and to which I am indebted, namely, *Il Volto di Adamo: La questione estetica nell'altro Occidente* by Gianroberto Scarcia,[10] *Beauty in Arabic Culture* by Doris Behrens-Abuseif,[11] *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* by Valérie Gonzales,[12] *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* by Oliver Leaman[13] and José Miguel Puerta-Vílchez, *Historia del Pensamiento Estético Árabe: Al-Andalus y la Estética Árabe Clásica*.[14] These, in turn, benefit directly or indirectly from the previous studies, now classics, on the history of Greek and Latin aesthetics, both ancient and medieval, such as the *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale* by Edgar de Bruyne,[15] the studies of Umberto Eco on medieval aesthetics[16] and the *History of Aesthetics* by Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz.[17] These scholars reacted in a constructive and well-argued fashion to the negative evaluation put forward by idealistic philosophy on the subject of medieval European aesthetics, in that it was considered poor and lacking from a theoretical point of view, owing to the prevalence of a religious and metaphysical vision. This prejudice, which has now been overcome, weighed even more heavily on medieval Muslim aesthetics.

Historically, aesthetics as an autonomous discipline was founded in the period of the Enlightenment by the German philosopher Alexander Gottfried Baumgarten (1714–1762). In his *Metaphysics*, he presents a 'gnosiology', divided into logic (the doctrine of rational knowledge) and aesthetics (the doctrine of sensual knowledge, from the Greek *aísthēsis*, 'sensation').[18] The aesthetics of Baumgarten deals with both mere sensual knowledge and with the theory of the beautiful as well as with the liberal arts.[19] According to Baumgarten, sensual knowledge is an inferior type of gnosiology as compared to logic, but it can attain perfection when it intuits the beauty of objects in their entirety. The aesthetics of Baumgarten was subsequently taken up by those idealist philosophers who, like Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), argued for the autonomy of aesthetic experience and considered the medieval period as devoid of any real and proper aesthetics, alleging that in the Middle Ages poetry and art had purely didactic aims and served solely to propagate religious truths.[20]

Following in the footsteps of de Bruyne, Eco and, among the orientalists, especially Scarcia, we propose as an accepted fact that the Arab-Islamic *Middle Ages* also possessed its own aesthetics to all intents and purposes, an aesthetics that was as complex and profound as it was wide-ranging and interdisciplinary. The thesis of this book is that the *Muqaddima* by

Ibn Khaldūn offers a perfect example of the Arab-Islamic aesthetics of the classical period.

In our aesthetic reading of the *Muqaddima*, we do not mean by 'aesthetics' a philosophy of art, in the manner of modern philosophers like Croce. We mean, more generally, a sufficiently well-argued and systematic reflection on sensual and intelligible beauty. In so doing, we adopt Eco's approach in his analysis of the aesthetic problem in Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, we are convinced that an aesthetic reading of the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn is as revealing of Arab-Islamic aesthetics, as Eco's aesthetic reading of Aquinas' theology is revealing of the aesthetics of Western Christianity. Given the Hellenistic background of both, it is no wonder that Ibn Khaldūn's aesthetics also emerges from the intimate features that characterise it such as 'beautiful', 'good', 'true', 'real', 'exact', 'perfect' and 'suitable for its purpose'.[21]

With regard to the aspects relating to the Khaldunian conception of knowledge, I am beholden to the epistemological reading of the *Muqaddima* proposed by Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābrī, who maintains that the principal problems dealt with by Ibn Khaldūn are those of knowledge, its criteria, objects and limits in the different disciplines.[22]

The reader will find there are some references in this book which may seem anachronistic, such as the comparison between the nostalgia of Ibn Khaldūn for the simplicity of the early revolutionary Islam, for its human prophet, a model of virtue, vigour and knowledge, and the nostalgia of Vladimir Majakovskij (1893–1930) for the humane simplicity of Lenin, who is knowledge [*znan'e*], arms [*sila*] and vigour [*oruchie*] and on the day of whose death it seemed 'that, as in ancient times, all Russia had become nomadic once more'.[23] Like Ibn Khaldūn, Majakovskij gives vent to his pain that the beauty of the revolutionary phase cannot last. It gives way to the State, rigidity, rules and mausoleums. 'I fear that processions and mausoleums … will drown the simplicity of Lenin in a bland holy oil'.[24] The Russia of 1917 still preserved marked features of its thousand-year-old civilisation which it shared with that of the Arab-Islamic East: the masses were primarily farmers but there were also nomads who reared livestock, as well as an élite whose culture had been shaped in medieval times by cosmopolitan Hellenism, Eastern Christianity and the Byzantine culture which had so much in common with the Arab-Persian East.

A modern Arab writer who had direct experience of the profound cultural communion between Russia and the Arab world was the Lebanese poet Mikhā'īl Nu'ayma (1889–1988), who spent the formative years of his youth in a seminary in the Ukraine in the period leading up to the October Revolution. In his autobiography, he speaks of his understanding and love for the Russian people and of how he feels part of them.[25] Among contemporary authors, it is George Corm (2015) who exhorts readers to an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the Arab and Russian culture in reaction to the narrow and exclusive comparison with Western

culture. He observes that the Russian and Arab intelligentsia of the nine-teenth century had a similar way of experiencing the effects of the European mirror. In the nineteenth century, like the Arab intelligentsia, the Russian would be fascinated by the European societies and cultures, either admiring them or hating them.[26] In agreement with Corm, our comparisons between Ibn Khaldūn and Majakovskij, like other reflections that are evoked in this book, are meant to emancipate us from the exclusive focus on the relation-ships between Islam and the West, and to enable us to understand aspects of the history of cultures from a *longue durée* perspective.[27]

Our book has a comparative approach, diachronically and synchroni-cally. We compare Ibn Khaldūn's aesthetics with the aesthetics of other civilisations: not only of Russia, but also of ancient Greece, pre-Islamic Arabia, medieval Europe, China and modern Europe. These comparisons imply a general theory of culture which needs to be further developed and which contributes to the current debate on global history.[28]

We also consider it important to recognise the directions indicated by Ibn Khaldūn, even if they were not actually pursued by him, due to the objective historical impossibility of such an undertaking. While in the past authors like Yves Lacoste tended to admire Ibn Khaldūn for his modernity, more recently scholars have suggested reading Ibn Khaldūn in the light of his time and historical context so as not to fall into Eurocentric anachro-nisms which would make him into the pioneer of modernity.[29] On the one hand, tendencies of this type are healthy, however, on the other hand, they run the risk of falling into that form of Eurocentrism *in reverse* that char-acterises so much of contemporary academic culture and denies Arab culture the historical possibility of constructing a progressive and emanci-pating modernity.[30] A form of Eurocentrism in reverse, in my opinion, is the desire to relegate Ibn Khaldūn to the confines of his fixed destiny, thereby ignoring the fact that the present, even the present of Ibn Khaldūn, is still living history with the inherent possibility of becoming. Only the future can tell us what directions human beings actually took. Despite taking into consideration the useful reminder of the historical context when reading Ibn Khaldūn, our aesthetic reading of the *Muqaddima* wel-comes the *old* method of approaching the *Muqaddima* suggested by Lacoste: reading Ibn Khaldūn in function of problems of our times does not mean distorting him; it means discovering the real richness of his thought which, for objective historical reasons, could not come fully to light during his epoch.[31]

The basic thesis of this work is therefore that until the *Muqaddima* is read from the point of view of its aesthetics, it will be impossible to grasp all its riches or to understand the aesthetics of classical Islam in its entirety, into which it gives us such a magnificent insight. We do not know if there are other texts or other Muslim authors who offer us a complete aesthetic reading of classical Islam. The *Muqaddima* is certainly a fundamental text in this sense. Its obsessive *leitmotiv* is sensual beauty, which has connotations

that are sometimes positive and sometimes negative: the rude simplicity of the Bedouins which is their unconscious beauty, the beauty of harmony and proportions, the inimitable beauty of the Qur'ān, the dangerous beauty of the lasciviousness that turns you aside from the pursuit of goodness, the beauty of false speeches that dissuade you from the truth and the beauty of luxury that drives civilisations inexorably to their ruin. Ibn Khaldūn does not pose the problem of beauty considered in an autonomous way philosophically. He rather poses the problem of knowledge (*'ilm*), of its criteria, its limits, its objects, its methods and its certainties. But in dealing with knowledge, he is continually faced with the problem of sensual beauty.

For these reasons, we argue that the *Muqaddima* contains an aesthetics of history. It is no coincidence that Ibn Khaldūn's definition of his historical method in terms of a 'new science' (*muḥdath*) induced certain scholars to compare the *Muqaddima* to the *Scienza nuova* by Giambattista Vico (1668–1774).[32] In our view, the analogy between Ibn Khaldūn and Vico does indeed consist in their common aesthetic perception of history and their organicist understanding of it. However, while Vico highlights the historiographic value of subjective and irrational perceptions that the ancient peoples expressed in their myths and poems, Ibn Khaldūn rejects legends and fantasies because they distract the historian from the objective truth, which is established through the aesthetic and epistemological criterion of *muṭābaqa* (correspondence between events and circumstances).[33]

As Eco observed, it is we moderns who consider the problem of beauty in isolation, and thereby reduce its significance so drastically. This is because our aesthetic universe is limited. The aesthetic universe of the Middle Ages was much broader than the modern one,[34] and included both the metaphysical and intelligible dimension of beauty and, by analogy, the dimension of sensual beauty, through a series of reciprocal cross-references that do not always allow us to distinguish clearly between the two. This dialectic of reciprocal cross-references is perfectly applicable to Arab-Islamic aesthetics in general and to the aesthetics of the *Muqaddima* in particular.

In order to highlight the intrinsic connection between knowledge and beauty in the *Muqaddima*, we have chosen to use two categories from among our instruments of analysis: 'epistemological beauty' and 'phenomenological beauty'. The first refers to beauty as an instrument (or an obstacle) to knowledge; the second refers to beauty as a phenomenon and experience. As in the case of the intelligible and sensual dimensions of beauty, its epistemological and phenomenological dimensions are in fact intrinsically linked and continually defined by analogy and through reciprocal cross-references.

This book is structured in terms of a 'journey' through the *Muqaddima*, which is in turn a 'journey' into history. It is not lacking in cross-references, foretastes of what is to come and flashbacks to what has been, but I believe that following the order of the *Muqaddima* itself is the best way

to rediscover the sensibility of the author. The present volume contains six chapters: after a brief, introductory chapter on the biography of Ibn Khaldūn and his historical context, comes Chapter 2, 'Beauty and Knowledge: The Meaning of "Beauty" (*jamāl*) and "Knowledge" (*'ilm*) in the *Muqaddima*', which provides some preliminary explanations on the terminology used by Ibn Khaldūn. Chapter 3, 'Knowledge and Beauty in History: Epistemological Beauty and Phenomenological Beauty in History', analyses the historical method described by Ibn Khaldūn in the introduction and the first pages of the first book of the *Muqaddima*, in the light of our aesthetic-epistemological reading. Chapter 4, 'Human Geography and the Unseen World: Knowledge and Beauty in Human Geography and in the Perceptions of the Unseen (*ghayb*)', refers mostly to the first chapter of the *Muqaddima* and is divided into two parts. The first part is on phenomenological beauty understood as moderation and balance in human geography, while the second part concerns epistemological beauty related to extrasensory perceptions: true in the case of prophecy and false in the case of diverse types of occult sciences. Chapter 5, 'Bedouin Society: Knowledge and Beauty in the Bedouin Society of Arab Paganism (*jāhiliyya*)', refers to the second chapter of the *Muqaddima* and deals with the phenomenological and epistemological aspects of beauty in the Bedouin society, in opposition to the sedentary civilisation characterised by the presence of a centralised State. Chapter 6, 'The Dawn of Islam: Knowledge and Beauty at the Dawn of Islam', refers both to the second chapter of the *Muqaddima* and, in a transversal way, to various parts of the book, in order to highlight the markedly aesthetic character of both the period of the Islamic revelation and of its epistemological content. This chapter contains a section on the poetics of the Qur'ān. Chapter 7, 'Sedentary Civilisation: The Aesthetic State', refers to the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the *Muqaddima* and deals with beauty in the mature civilisation, be it epistemological or phenomenological, characterised as it is by the State organisation, by the flourishing of the arts and sciences and by their inevitable decline.

Our conclusion, Chapter 8, is titled 'The *Muqaddima* as a tragedy'. It sums up the fundamental points of our aesthetic reading of the *Muqaddima*, based on its indissoluble connection between knowledge and beauty. The *Muqaddima* is the stage for the human tragedy inasmuch as it is an expression of an insoluble contradiction between light and shade: the light of the impassioned attachment of Ibn Khaldūn to the ephemeral beauty of physical bodies and the shade contained in the inadequacy of his faith in eternal life and in the resurrection of the body.

Notes

1 Throughout this book, the dates of dynasties and the births and deaths of historical figures are often approximate when referred to pre-modern times.
2 [Ibn Rushd] Averroè, *Commento al Perì Poietikēs*, translated by C. Baffioni (Milan: Coliseum, 1990), 27ff.

3 Jorge Luis Borges, 'La ricerca di Averroè', *L'Aleph* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959), 99; and Borges, 'La busca de Averroes', *El Aleph*, in *Obras completas* 1923–1972 (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1974), 587.

4 *Kitāb al-'ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa al-khabar fī tā'rīkh al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man 'āṣarahum min dhawī al-sha'n al-sulṭān al-akbar* [*Book of Lessons and Archive of Early and Subsequent History, Dealing with the Political Events Concerning the Arabs, non-Arabs, and Berbers, and the Supreme Rulers who were Contemporary with Them*], Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), Vol. I, 13.

5 Titles of chapter are quoted in an abridged manner.

6 William MacGuckin de Slane, *Prolègomènes historiques d'Ibn Khaldūn* (Paris, 1862, 1865 and 1868), quoted in Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (1980), Vol. I, cviii.

7 For example, Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun: Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

8 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-ta'rīf bi Ibn Khaldūn wa riḥlatihi gharban wa sharqan* [*Presenting Ibn Khaldūn and his Journey West and East*], edited by Muḥammad Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo: s.n., 1370/1951).

9 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (1980), Vol. III, 498. For more exhaustive bibliographical information on Ibn Khaldūn, cf. María Jesús Viguera Molins, 'Conclusiones, fuentes y bibliografía', in *Ibn Jaldún: El Mediterraneo en el siglo XIV* (Sevilla-Granada: Fundación José Manuel Lara y El Legado Andalusí, 2006), 414–455.

10 Gianroberto Scarcia, *Il volto di Adamo: La questione estetica nell'altro occidente* [*The Face of Adam: The Aesthetic Question in the Other West*] (Venice: Il Cardo, 1995).

11 Doris Behrens-Abuseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

12 Valérie Gonzales, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies, 2001).

13 Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

14 José Miguel Puerta-Vílchez, *Historia del Pensamiento Estético Árabe: Al-Andalus y la Estética Árabe Clásica* (Madrid: Akal, 1997), trans. *Aesthetics in Arab Thought: From Pre-Islamic Arabia through Andalous* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

15 Edgar de Bruyne, *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*, Vols I–III (Brugges: De Tempel, 1946).

16 Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982); and Eco, *Arte e bellezza nell'estetica medievale* (Milan: Bompiani, 1994 [1987]).

17 Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Storia dell'estetica*, Vols 1–2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1979, 1st Polish edn 1970).

18 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Metaphysics*, translated by Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

19 The liberal arts, according to the classification of the sciences favoured in medieval Europe, were divided into *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric and dialectics) and into *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy), see Ernest Robert Curtius, *Letteratura europea e Medio Evo latino* (Rome: La Nuova Italia, 1995, first German edition 1948), 45ff.

20 Benedetto Croce, *Breviario di estetica*, written in 1912. Croce, *Breviario di estetica: Estetica in nuce* (Milan: Adelphi, 1990).

21 For a comprehensive exposition on the meaning of aesthetics which is broadly in agreement with our approach, the reader can refer to Renato Barilli, *Corso di estetica* (Milan: Mondadori, 1989), following in the footsteps of J. Dewey's *Arts as Experience* (1934), reprinted in Jo Ann Boydston, *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, Vol. 10 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).

22 Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābrī, *Naḥnu wa al-turāth: Qirāʾāt muʿāṣira fī turāthinā al-falsafī* [*We and our Heritage: Contemporary Readings on our Philosophical Heritage*] (Beirut: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda al-ʿarabiyya, 2006), 377ff. The reader can also refer to Zaid Ahmad, *Ibn Khaldūn's Epistemology* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), a book that draws attention to the importance of the often-neglected Chapter 6 of the *Muqaddima* ('The Various Kinds of Sciences').

23 'Et c'est/ comme si/ la Russie/ était redevenue nomade', Vladimir Majakovskij, 'Vladimir Il'itch Lenin' (1924), in *Poèmes 1924–1926* translated by Claude Frioux (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 5. English translations of quoted works throughout the book are Prudence Crane's or ours, unless otherwise noted.

24 'Je crains/ que les processions et les mausolées,/ le statut établi/ des dévotions/ ne noient/ dans une fade huile sainte/ la simplicité/ léninienne', Majakovskij (2000), 37.

25 Mikhāʾīl Nuʿayma, *Sabʿūna: Ḥikāyat ʿumrī* [*Seventy: The Story of my Life*], Vols 1–3 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1959–1960).

26 Georges Corm, *Pensée et politique dans le monde arabe: Contextes historiques et problématiques XIXe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), 149. Corm draws inspiration from the analysis of Russian culture of Nina Berberova, *C'est moi qui souligne* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1989).

27 Fernand Braudel, 'Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée', *Annales* 4 (October–December 1958), 725–753.

28 We understand 'global history' in the general sense of a field of research that analyses historical transformations in their world dimension, from the point of view of time and space, and opposes Eurocentric prejudices which often affect national history. Samir Amin, *Global History: A View from the South* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011).

29 For example, Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

30 This controversy is analogous to that between 'Orientalism' and 'Orientalism Overturned', which Edward Said contrasts in the twentieth century, see *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and Ṣādiq Jalāl al-Aẓm, *Al-istishrāq wa al-istishrāq maʿkūsan* [*Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse*] (Beirut: Dār al-ḥadātha, 1981).

31 Lacoste (1998), 15.

32 Giambattista Vico, *Principi di scienza nuova* (Milan: Mondadori, 1990).

33 On comparisons between Ibn Khaldūn and Vico, cf. Francesco Gabrieli, 'Ibn Khaldūn: Il Vico dell'Islam', *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani* V (1975): 122–126. On the '*muṭābaqa*', cf. Chapter 3.

34 Eco (1994), 8.

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1   Ibn Khaldūn and his historical context[1]

The life of Ibn Khaldūn, intellectual and member of the Arab political-administrative ruling class of the fourteenth century is emblematic, both with respect to the society to which he belonged and to the fundamental *leitmotiv* of his aesthetics of history, which I shall analyse in this book. In his prologue to the *A History of the Arab Peoples*, the historian Albert Hourani (1993) takes the life of Ibn Khaldūn as an example in order to illustrate the profound, unshakeable unity of the classical Arab-Muslim culture along with its diversity, its cultural variety, its political fragmentation, the instability of its State institutions and the precariousness of human life. A civilisation in which a family from Southern Arabia, the Khaldūns, could return to Spain, its place of origin, six centuries after having left it, and still find itself in a familiar environment, could not but have a profound cultural unity.[2] Hourani goes on to maintain that this unity was the result of the Arabic language, a common body of knowledge and the belief in a sole creator God.

To Hourani's words I should like to add that the unity and the cultural wealth of the classical Arab culture, its strength and its fragility are displayed in a masterly manner by the *Muqaddima* and appear in a particularly rich way in an aesthetic reading of the work.

In the course of his life, Ibn Khaldūn moved from one part of the Arab world to another, as was often common practice for the members of the cosmopolitan cultural élite to which he belonged. In the service of diverse dynasties of the Maghreb or Andalusia, he switched his allegiance whenever it proved advantageous to him or according to the changing fortunes of the States and their relationships with their client States. The ruling houses, in turn, suffered from a congenital vulnerability due to the egalitarian structure of their tribal-military social base. Indeed, the latter were able to overturn the State every time it came into conflict with their interests.[3]

The *leitmotiv* of the aesthetics of the *Muqaddima* is twofold: the virtues of the Bedouins which are contrasted with the vices of sedentary citizens; and the seeds of decadence that begin to destroy the most flourishing States from within, from the very moment of their birth. Both stem from

observing the social and historical situation in the Maghreb and from the real political precariousness of its dynasties. However, the aesthetics of the *Muqaddima* is not an added ingredient in the historiographical vision of Ibn Khaldūn, but rather it is an integral part of its historiography: it springs from it and is explained through it.

Ibn Khaldūn was born in Tunis in 1332 and died in Cairo in 1406. His life is known to us mainly through his autobiography, *al-Ta'rīf* (*Introduction*).[4] His family belonged to the political-administrative ruling class. Originally from the Arab peninsula but having moved to Seville, towards the year 1230 they left Andalusia which had fallen prey to internal struggles. They settled in Tunis, at the time of the foundation of the Hafsid dynasty (Banū Ḥafṣ) (1228–1574), one of the dynasties of Bedouin origin in the Maghreb. The Khaldūn family was in their service and enjoyed their protection.

Ibn Khaldūn's education was thorough and, in accordance with the canons of the time, included both the religious (the Qur'ān, the Sunna, theology and Islamic jurisprudence) and the rational sciences (philosophy, logic, mathematics, medicine and astronomy). He also received training in history and epistolography (the art of composing official letters according to the sophisticated rules and etiquette of the administration). When the Marinid dynasty (Banū Marīn) of Morocco conquered Tunisia for a certain time (in 1347), Ibn Khaldūn switched to their service. He thereby gave proof of great diplomatic ability that would last his entire life and also, as some saw it, of opportunism. In 1348, the plague devastated the entire Arab world and Ibn Khaldūn lost his parents, friends and masters. He was subsequently active as a courtier and official at various North West African courts (Tunis, Bougie and Fez). After an imprisonment of two years for having taken the wrong side in power politics, he entered the service of the Nasrid sultanate of Granada (Banū Naṣr), the last Arab sultanate in Spain, which would survive until the definite triumph of the Reconquista in 1492. After having returned to Morocco once more, he retired to a fortress (Qal'at ibn Salāma, 1374–1378) in the Algerian desert to devote himself to composing the *Muqaddima*. From that point on, Ibn Khaldūn abandoned political life. In 1382, he finally settled and spent the rest of his days in Cairo, brilliant capital of the Mamluk dynasty (Mamlūk, pl. Mamālīk 1250–1517), where he devoted himself to teaching and the magistracy, in the role of judge (*qāḍī*), among the most prestigious for a Muslim intellectual. He would lose all his family in a shipwreck. Tradition has it that in Damascus he had met the Turco-Mongol conqueror Tamerlane, who had so admired his ability and culture that he invited him to enter his service as an adviser but that Ibn Khaldūn had refused.

The fourteenth century in which Ibn Khaldūn lived was a century of decline, from which the Arab-Islamic world never fully recovered again. The Arab-Islamic civilisation, whose political unity had begun to fragment as early as the ninth century, contained elements of great diversity but also

of profound unity. It spread from the western Mediterranean to the coasts of India and the borders of China, and drew the surplus that was crucial for its growth from international long-distance commerce and trade. In the fourteenth century, the Arab East had not yet recovered from the devastating Mongol invasions of Gengis Khan (with the destruction of Baghdad in 1258), when it suffered the new and even more devastating invasions of the Mongol Tamerlane. The Timurids (fifteenth century), successors of Tamerlane, ruled in Iran and in Mesopotamia, while Egypt and Syria were governed by the Mamluks, a dynasty that was originally composed of Turkish military slaves in the service of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. In Asia Minor, the rise of the Ottomans in the Balkans was temporarily halted by the Timurids (1402), only to begin again a few years later. Starting from the sixteenth century, the whole Arab world, with the exception of Morocco, would be transformed into Ottoman provinces. The Arab West, the Maghreb, was under the rule of the Hafsid dynasties of Tunisia (1228–1274) and of the Marinids of Morocco (1269–1420) who were mentioned above. In Spain, the Arab civilisation steadily declined in the face of the Reconquista, until the fall of the last Arab sultanate, the Nasrids of Granada, in 1492.

What is important to underline here are the social characteristics of the Maghreb, which constitute the principal object of observation for Ibn Khaldūn when developing his historiography. As Lacoste (1998) explains in detail, the social and economic structures of the Maghreb were different from those of the Arab East. In the East (Egypt and Mesopotamia), the farming component, dependent on the existence of great water courses, was fundamental in the social production, although the surplus which was crucial for the expansion of the States derived from international commerce. The farm labourers, tied to the States that directed the great irrigation works, were a servile manpower, bound by personal relationships to the ruling class. The Arab and Berber West, on the other hand, was made up of tribal, nomadic-pastoral societies who earned their vital surplus from the trade provided by the Sudanese Gold Route. As well as imposing tributes of various types on the population, the States participated in these benefits both indirectly by taxing the commercial transactions and directly through the merchants who were associated with them.

In the fourteenth century, the conflict that existed between the Hafsid and Marinid dynasties of the Maghreb was due to their desire to control the trade routes. The benefits to be had from trade were fabulous, but owing to its long-distance nature, it rendered the beneficiary States extremely vulnerable. This observation is obviously true for the entire Arab world but particularly for societies like those of the Maghreb whose pastoral economy remained a subsistence economy. In fact, it was enough for a trade route to be interrupted for diverse reasons for the States to rapidly go to ruin. The ruling class of the Maghreb was composed of an

aristocracy of merchants, military and tribal chiefs, whose precarious situation was due to the fact that the fortunes made from trade which were not reinvested in the business could either be lost or confiscated by the State. In contrast, in the Arab East the ruling class was a military caste and often of foreign origin (especially Turkish).

It was no wonder then that the *Muqaddima* describes history as a tale of precariousness, given the nature of the social structures peculiar to the Maghreb. As we will examine in the following chapters, in the fine analysis of Ibn Khaldūn, the group feeling (*'aṣabiyya*) was at once a deciding factor in the rise of the centralised States and the cause of their ruin.

Notes

1 The information contained in this chapter is very general. For a more detailed account, cf. among others, Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun: Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), the introductory pages of the translation of the *Muqaddima* by Vincent Monteil, *Ibn Khaldūn: Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (Paris: Sindbad, 1967–1968), and the translation by Franz Rosenthal, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]), the classics Muhsen Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophical Foundation in the Science of Culture* London: Routledge, 1957), Charles Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), and more recently Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).
2 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013 [1993]), 4.
3 Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun: Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), 123ff.
4 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-ta'rīf bi Ibn Khaldūn wa riḥlatihi gharban wa sharqan* [*Presenting Ibn Khaldūn and his Journey West* and *East*], edited by Muḥammad Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo: s.n., 1370/1951).

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With Him are the keys of the Invisible, that none knows but Him. He knows everything that is on earth and in the sea. Not a single leaf falls without Him knowing it. Not a single grain exists in obscurity, not a single damp or dry thing can be, but they are written in a clear Book (59)

(Qur'ān, *Anʿām* [*Cattle*], 6:59)

To conclude, in this chapter we have clarified the meaning of 'beauty' (*jamāl*) and 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*) in the *Muqaddima* in a general and preliminary manner so as to be able to embark on our aesthetic voyage through the *Muqaddima* with instruments that are suitable to steer our course. On closer inspection, though, our voyage has already begun. From what we have illustrated, there emerges not only the centrality of the problem of beauty in the *Muqaddima*, but also its profound and complex connection with the problem of knowledge.

In the next chapter, we shall examine the problem of beauty in history, understood both as a *new science* of whose paternity Ibn Khaldūn is rightly proud, and as a concrete unfolding of civilisations and human affairs over time.

Notes

1 The adjectival form, *jamīl* (beautiful), which is not analysed in this chapter, recurs in its turn a few times in the *Muqaddima*, and also mostly indicates sensual beauty although at times it refers to moral beauty. Beautiful and beneficial (*jamīla ṣāliḥa*) rulership (*malaka*, here not in the sense of 'habit') is at the service of the interests of the subjects.

> If the rulership and its effects are good in as much as the inner purpose of the political authority has been fully achieved, and if the rulership is beautiful and beneficial, then it will serve the interests of the subjects. Instead, if it is bad and unjust, it will harm the subjects and provoke their ruin.

> فإذا كانت هذه الملكة و توابعها بمكان من الجودة حصل المقصود من السلطان على أتم الوجوه فإنها إن كانت جميلة صالحة كان ذلك مصلحة لهم و إن كانت سيئة متعسفة كان ذلك ضرراً عليهم و هلاكاً لهم

Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. I, 340. Ibn Khaldūn (1970) is always quoted with modern Arabic orthography.

For a more accurate English translation of passages of the *Muqaddima*, the reader can refer to Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]). For this passage, cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 383.

2 Charles Pellat, 'ADAB ii. Adab in Arabic Literature', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/4 (1983), 439–444.
3 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 28–29.
4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 40.
5 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 29.

  6 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 40.
  7 Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), 30–31.
  8 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 113 ضعقت.
  9 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 124.
 10 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 355.
 11 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 397–398.
 12 Ibn Khaldūn (1970) does not include passages referred in our text as 'to leave the realm of erroneous conjectures (*wahm*) for truth (*ḥaqīqa*), and in so doing they aspire to union with the First Principle (*mabda'*) of all things and to becoming part of the Universe (*kawn*)', mentioned in other editions, that reflect an accentuated monism that was typical of Ibn 'Arabī; Ibn Khaldūn, (1980), Vol. II, 398, n. 221.
 13 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 355.
 14 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 398.
 15 Phaedrus, the first to speak in the discussion on love in this Platonic dialogue, says that if there were an army composed entirely of lovers and their beloved ones, they would defeat any enemy, even if there were very few of them. In fact, the lover would prefer to die rather than abandon his beloved or be seen by him throwing down his arms; *Simposio* 178e–179b, in Platone, *Tutte le opere* (Rome: Newton, 1997), 348–351. Greek parallel text.
 16 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 42–43.
 17 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 48–49.
 18 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 357.
 19 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 400.
 20 Knowledge and human capabilities develop in diverse civilisations as a result of the assimilation of contributions brought by others (diffusion) or through autonomous and independent development (convergence), cf. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–), Vol. I: *Introductory Orientations*, 226ff., with reference to the development of scientific thought in ancient China and its relationship with the development of scientific thought in the Arab-Islamic world and in Europe.
 21 Eco (1982), 165–170.
 22 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 353.
 23 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 401–402.
 24 The Mu'tazilite theology is a rationalistic tendency of Muslim theology (*kalām*) and is considered unorthodox by the dominant theology on account of its refusal to interpret the attributes of God in a literal and anthropomorphistic sense, and for its defence of free will as well as other aspects of its doctrine.
 25 Ibn Khaldūn (1970) mentions '*khiṭābihim*' (discourse) instead of '*khaṭā'ihim*' (wrong).
 26 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 328.
 27 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 374.
 28 Louis Gardet, *L'Islam: Religion et communauté* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 30.
 29 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 46–47.
 30 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 58–59.
 31 Francesco Gabrieli, *La letteratura araba* (Florence/Milan: Sansoni/Accademia: 1967), 120.
 32 [Plato] Platone, *La Repubblica* [*Republic*] (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994), Book VII, 514aff.
 33 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 47.
 34 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 378.
 35 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 343.
 36 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 383–384.

37 وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ (Qur'ān, *al-Ḍuḥā*, [*The Forenoon*], 93:4).
38 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 225–226.
39 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, (1980), I, 254–255.
40 Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun: Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), 174.
41 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 362.
42 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 406.
43 Analogies between the theory of prophecy in Avicenna and in Ibn Khaldūn have been analysed by Jamal Abdelali Elamrani, 'Prophétie selon Ibn Khaldūn et philosophie arabe classique', in *Ibn Khaldūn et la fondation des sciences sociales*, edited by Zeïneb ben Saïd and Georges Labica (Paris: Publisud, 2009).
44 For the connections between Avicenna and the Gnostic-Ismaili thought, see Alessandro Bausani, *L'Enciclopedia dei Fratelli della Purità* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1978), 22, where the author says that in this respect he agrees with Henri Corbin's theses more than with the allegoristic interpretation of Avicenna by Amélie-Marie Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1938).
45 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 327.
46 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 367.
47 Doris Behrens-Abuseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 185.
48 François Villon (1431–1463), 'Ballade des dames du temps jadis', in *Poésies* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992). The motif which was originally biblical (Books of Wisdom, Isaiah and Baruch) became a recurrent theme in medieval and modern European literature.
49 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 62.
50 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 78.
51 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 362–363; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 406–407.
52 [Plato] Platone, *Fedro* [*Phaedrus*], 275a–b, in Platone (1997), 507.
53 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1150–1210), *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm*, in Persian, quoted by Ziva Vesel, *Les Encyclopédies persanes* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur la Civilisation, 1986), 35–38
54 Qur'ān, *Jinn* (*The Jinn*), 72: 25–28.
55 Mohammed Hocine Benkheira, 'Unseen', in Mohammed Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Dictionnaire du Coran* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 25–427.

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[Plato] Platone (1994) *La Repubblica*. Milan: Rizzoli.

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account of the contrast with what it is not: the purification of self and the fear of God, the revered and sublime pages, the radiant, joyous faces. The beauty of paradise mingles with that of the creation: wines and reeds, olive trees and palms, leafy gardens, fruits and pastures. In contrast to all this, there are the dusty faces (*'alayhā ghabara*), veiled in darkness (*tarhaquhā qatara*), the silence, the frown and the turning away.

Also, at the time of the Qur'ānic revelation, as is reported in the *Muqaddima*, men were silent at first and refrained from composing verses as if rendered mute by so much beauty.

To conclude, the silence of the *Muqaddima* is perfectly consistent with the way Ibn Khaldūn speaks to us of beauty. Looking more closely, Ibn Khaldūn hardly ever speaks of intelligible beauty, save in rare cases and in a clearly allegorical way. For him, beauty (*jamāl*) is sensual, whether it be a beauty defined by contrast, or whether it be in the harmony of forms, colours and sounds, whether it be ethical and perceptible beauty because composed of concrete actions or whether it be a beauty composed of a palpable silence.

In the course of this book, we have at times stated that *although* Ibn Khaldūn does not directly and explicitly pose the problem of the beautiful, the *Muqaddima* can be read from an aesthetic perspective. The analysis of beauty in history presented in this third chapter takes us even further. It allows us to affirm that *thanks to the fact that* Ibn Khaldūn does not put the problem of the beautiful explicitly and directly, the *Muqaddima* can be read in an aesthetic way. If Ibn Khaldūn had openly posed the problem of the beautiful, he would probably have given a rigid and doctrinal exposition similar to the way in which he presents the contents of the diverse arts and sciences. Precisely because he does not pose this problem explicitly, he manages to speak freely of beauty to us, without the restrictions of ideology, reason and awareness.

Notes

1 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. I, 2.
2 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]), Vol. I, 6.
3 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 56–58. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 71–73.
4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 71–73.
5 The Ismā'īlīs are a Shiite community. An Iranian Ismā'īlī sect, known as the *ḥashīshīyūna*, represented a serious political threat for the Seljuk Sultanate in the eleventh century.
6 *Imām*, literally, he who leads the believers in prayer, comes to mean, by extension, the political leader of the Muslim community, the caliph. The Shiite and even more so the Ismā'īlī tradition, bestowed supernatural and sometimes semi-divine status on the imam.
7 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 2.
8 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 6.

9 Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun: Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), 55–56. Al-Ābilī? We have not found confirmation of this information in the sources.

10 ٥٤ ... إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّه الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (Qur'ān, *Al-Aʿrāf* [*The Battlements*], 7:54).

11 [Ibn Rushd] Averroes, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa taqrīr mā bayna al-sharīʿa wa al-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*, translated by Marc Geoffroy, Averroës, *Discours décisif* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 140–142.

12 [Ibn Rushd] Averroes (1996), 120–121. It refers to the rules of construction for metaphors (*majāz*), [Ibn Rushd] Averroes (1996), 118.

13 Gianni Vattimo, *La fine della modernità* [*The End of Modernity*] (Milan: Garzanti, 1985), 16.

14 Garcin de Tassy, *Rhétorique et prosodie des langues de l'orient musulman* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1873), 102. The essential unity of the rules of Arabic, Turkish and Persian rhetoric and the fact of having been conserved intact until the modern era, allows us to cite this late work written in Muslim India where Persian was the literary and administrative language until the nineteenth century.

15 Shams-e Qays, *Al-Muʿjam fi maʿāyīr ashʿār al-ʿajam*, edited by Sirus Shamisā (Tehran: Entešhārāt-e Ferdows, 1373/1995), 190.

16 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 11–12.

17 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 19.

18 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 17.

19 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 26.

20 [Ibn Sīnā], Avicenne, *ʿIlm al-nafs*, edited by Ján Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre ash-Shifāʾ*, Vols I–II (Prague: Editions de l'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956a), I, 177. [Ibn Sīnā], Avicenne), *ʿIlm al-nafs*, translated by Ján Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre ash-Shifāʾ*, Vols I–II (Prague: Editions de l'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956b), II, 129.

21 Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Cairo: s.n., 1964). Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, translated by William Henry Temple Gairdner, *Mishkāt Al-Anwar* ('The Niche for Lights') (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924), n.p.

22 Cf. Chapter 2, n. 8.

23 De Tassy (1873), 9.

24 For example, Auguste Comte, *Cours de Philosophie Positive* [1830–1842] (Paris, Nathan, 1989).

25 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 61.

26 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 76–77.

27 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 247–248.

28 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 278–279.

29 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 316–317.

30 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 355.

31 We are thinking of Aristotelian logic and, in particular, *Topics, where Aristotle expounds* the attributes of a substance or the predicates: definition (*hóros*), property (*ídion*), genus (*génos*) and accident (*sunbebêkòs*). A 'definition' is a sentence signifying the essence of a thing. A 'property' belongs exclusively to a thing but is not inherent in its essence. A 'genus' is a character that distinguishes a thing from other things that all belong to the same kind. An 'accident' may belong or not belong to a thing; see Aristotle, *Topics,* translated by J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), Vol. I, Book I, 4–5, 101b11–102b5, n.p. We are also thinking of the *Metaphysics*, with regard to 'capacity' (*dynamis*), 'incapacity', the 'possible' (*dynatón*) and the 'impossible' (*adynatón*). Aristotle distinguishes

between three types of possible: that which is not of necessity false'; that which is true; and that which is incapable of being true. The possible of which Ibn Khaldūn speaks concerning true historical facts belongs, in our opinion, to the Aristotelian category of that which is true. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), Book V, 12, 1610. Greek text *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, edited by W. David Ross, Vols I–II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), Vol. I, Book Δ, 1019b, n.p.

32 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 329. The text mentions *faṣl* instead of *ṣinf*.
33 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 371–372.
34 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 107–108.
35 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 118.
36 Qur'ān, *Nūr* [*Light*], 24:35.
37 Imru' al-Qays, *Mu'allaqa*, in 'The Hanged *Poems*: The Poem of Imru ul-Quais', translated by F.E. Johnson, in *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Vols I–XIV, *Ancient Arabia*, edited by C.F. Horne (New York: Park, Austin and Lipscomb, 1917), Vol. V, n.p.. Arabic text: Imru' al-Qays, 'Mu'allaqa', translated by and commentary Simon Gandz, *Die Mu'allaqa des Imrulqais* (Vienna: Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, 1913).
38 Al-Walīd Ibn Yazīd, *Dīwān*, edited by Francesco Gabrieli, *Dīwān Al-Walīd Ibn Yazīd* (s.l: s.n., 1937), 56, poem n. 91.
39 '*Azal*', pre-eternity, a theological and philosophical term, does not appear explicitly in the *Muqaddima*.
40 Imru' al-Qays (1917).
41 Quoted by Francesco Gabrieli, *La letteratura araba* (Florence/Milan: Sansoni/Accademia, 1967), 57.
42 Imru' al-Qays (1913), 114; and Imru' al-Qays (1917), n.p.
43 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 18–19.
44 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, (1980), Vol. I, 28–29.
45 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 40; and Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 29.
46 On the meaning of these terms in ancient Greek and Roman aesthetics and that of medieval Europe, cf. Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz *Storia dell'estetica*, Vols I–III (Torino: Einaudi, 1979, 1st Polish edn 1970).
47 Ḥadīth XVI, in Al-Nawawī (1233–1277), *Al-Arba'īna*, translated by M.A. Sabri, *Quaranta ḥadīth*, (Rome: Centro Editoriale Studi Islamici, 1982), 70–71. Arabic parallel text.
48 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 365.
49 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 415–416.
50 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 417.
51 The Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180) is the author of the *Meditations* (*Tà eis heautón*, 'To one's self'), Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (London: Erebus Society, 2017).
52 Mark 10:17–23, *Christian Standard Bible* (CSB) (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017).
53 Homer, *Odyssey*, XI, 541–547, translated by S. Butler (s.l., s.n., 1898), 196–197.
54 Longinus, *Perì Hýpsous*, translated by H.L. Havell, *On the Sublime* (London: Macmillan, 1990). For the Greek text: Longinus, *Perì Hýpsous*, translated by Giulio Guidorizzi: Anonimo, *Il Sublime* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), 57.

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Shams-e Qays (Shams al-Din Moḥammad Ebn Qeys al-Razi) (1373/1995) *Al-Mu'jam fi ma'āyīr ash'ār al-'ajam*, ed. Sirus Shamisā. Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Ferdows.

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experience. A protagonist of the 'history' of his time in the sense that he was a diplomat and a political figure, Ibn Khaldūn was also a refined poet as can be seen from some autobiographical anecdotes in the *Muqaddima*.

Like Ibn Khaldūn, al-Ghazālī in *The Niche for Lights* underlines the analogy between poetry and prophecy and the non-scientific dimension of poetry. He compares prophets to people who are gifted with poetic and musical sensibility. If the most able connoisseurs of music were to assemble in order to explain to somebody who lacks this sensibility why music is moving, they would not succeed. In just the same way, it is difficult to explain how imagination works in the prophets to ordinary people who have nothing to do with prophecy.

It is only by considering all these elements which are present in the universe of the *Muqaddima* and held together by invisible threads that weave its multifaceted unity and cohesion that we can grasp the meaning of the epistemological beauty of prophecy according to Ibn Khaldūn. In modern terms, but also banally, it could be said that prophecy is the highest form of poetry, that the Prophet is a sublime poet inspired by God and that the Qur'ān is his literary work of an inimitable beauty. We will return to this association between poetry and prophecy in Chapter 6 of this book.

Notes

1 The first book of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* coincides with the *Muqaddima* itself, but does not include the introductory part in which Ibn Khaldūn illustrates his historiographic method in a systematic way.

2 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Vincent Monteil, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (Paris: Sindbad, 1967–1968), 72, n. 1.

3 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. I, 148–149.

4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]), Vol. I, 167–168, 172.

5 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, translated by John Selby Watson, *On the Nature of Things*, poetical version by J.M. Good (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), n.p. The passage cited is the well-known beginning of the poem. For the Latin text: Lucrezio, *La Natura delle Cose*, translated by Luca Canali (Milan: BUR, 1996), 68, 70, based on the edition by Cyril Bayley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922).

6 *Al-Qur'ān*, translated by Alesaandro Bausani, *Il Corano* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1992), lviii, hereafter quoted as Bausani (1992).

7 Bausani (1992), lxv.

8 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 174.

9 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 158–159.

10 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 177–178.

11 Ṭarafa, 'Mu'allaqa', in A. al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-adab fī adabiyāt wa inshā'al-lugha al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2015), 489–490; and Michael Sells, 'The Mu'allaqa of Tarafa', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986): 25–27.

12 However, let us note that Ibn Khaldūn uses the adjective '*aẓīm* several times with reference to the sensual and imposing beauty of the cities as we saw in Chapter 3 concerning a Qur'ānic verse which commentators wrongly construed

as implying the existence of an immense city with palaces of silver and gold and columns of emeralds and rubies (Qur'ān, *Al-Fajr* [*The Dawn*], 89:6–8).

13 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 374: نيكث

14 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 373–374.

15 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 424–425.

16 Thomas Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysi de Divinis Nominibus Expositio* Vol. IV, 5, 135, quoted in Umberto Eco, *Le problème esthétique chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), 39, Latin parallel text. In the original Italian edition, Eco (1982) the passage from Dionysius is given solely in Latin; see Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982).

17 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 175, I read بآلانها.

18 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 175–176.

19 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 196–197.

20 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 176–178.

21 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 197–199.

22 [Ibn Sīnā], Avicenne, *'Ilm al-nafs*, edited by Ján Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre ash-Shifā'*, Vols I–II (Prague: Editions de l'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956a), Vol. I, 167–168; and [Ibn Sīnā], Avicenne, *'Ilm al-nafs*, translated by Ján Bakoš, *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre ash-Shifā'*, Vols I–II (Prague: Editions de l'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Sciences, 1956b), Vol. II, 122.

23 Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Cairo: s.n., 1964), n.p.; and al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, translated by William Henry Temple Gairdner, *Mishkāt Al-Anwar (The Niche for Lights)* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924).

24 [Ibn Rushd] Averroes, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa taqrīr mā bayna al-sharī 'a wa al-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*, translated by Marc Geoffroy, *Averroës. Discours décisif* (Paris, Flammarion, 1996). Arabic parallel text. Cf. Chapter 3.

25 We are thinking, for example, of the conception of the poet as inspired by the gods in ancient Greece, and of the association between poetry and magic in archaic societies. Regarding a comparison between the condemnation of poetry in Plato and in the Qur'ān, cf. Giovanna Lelli, 'Pour une méthodologie du comparatisme. La fonction du poète en Grèce et en terre d'Islam', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 62(2) (June 2009): 231–240. See also the introduction of Diego Lanza to the *Poetics* of Aristotle in Aristotele, *Poetica*, translated by Diego Lanza (Milan: Rizzoli, 1990).

26 Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, translated by Massimo Campanini, *La citttà virtuosa* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1996), 198, 200; and Arabic text: *Kitāb arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, edited by Albert Nader (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1985).

27 [Ibn Sīnā] Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Shi'r*, edited by 'A. Badawī (Cairo: s.n., 1966). Ismail M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*, a critical study with an annotated translation of the text (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

28 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 333: يجريانها.

29 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 333: twice تركيب تركيب.

30 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 332–333.

31 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 379.

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In accordance with this opposition between taste and tastelessness, in the *Muqaddima*, linear time does not allow for a return to *jāhiliyya*, a historical period whose aesthetic dimension is amplified by its connection with prophecy. 'Taste' guides the human being in his discovery of a world in which the primary nature of things is forever lost, modified as it has been by habits, colours and savours. Since an authentic faith in eschatology is not really felt in the *Muqaddima*, 'taste' for Ibn Khaldūn allows man to find only surrogates for the beauty of primary nature. Such surrogates vary according to individual cases and include: the beauty of historical science, of singular events whose true nature is restored by the historian, of images of civilisation which, like a photographer, the historian snatches from the passage of time, the beauty of poetry and prophecy whose cognitive processes reveal similarities and, finally, the beauty of mysticism whose practices are similar to a kind of acting out in order to draw closer to God.

Notes

1 François Jullien, *L'Éloge de la fadeur: A partir de la pensée et de l'esthétique chinoise* (Paris: Editions Philippe Picquier, 1991).
2 J. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, I: *Introductory Orientations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 9.
3 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. I, 273.
4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]), Vol. I, 305–306.
5 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 359.
6 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 402–403.
7 Maxime Rodinson, *Mahomet* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 67.
8 Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, edited by Umm Fārūq Cook, *Sīrat Ibn Hishām: Biography of the Prophet*, abridged by Abdus-Salām M. Hārūn (Cairo: Al-Falah Foundation, 2000), 23–23.
9 This latter passage is not mentioned in Ibn Hishām (2000). Arabic text: Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, edited by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya li-Ibn Hishām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), Vol. I, 190–191.
10 Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Fī al-shi'r al-jāhilī* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-maṣriyya, 1926).
11 According to Qur'ān's commentators, a thorny and dry plant.
12 Al-Nawawī (1233–1277), *Al-Arba'īna* [*Forty ḥadīth*], translated by M.A. Sabri (Rome: Centro Editoriale Studi Islamici, 1982), 40–41.
13 Pierre Lory, 'La notion de Dieu dans l'Arabie anté-islamique', *Cahier d'etudes arabes* 2 (1988): 72–107. The author refers, among others, to Mircea Eliade, *Le Mythe de l'eternel retour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
14 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 264–265.
15 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 297.
16 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 93; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 117–118.
17 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 117–118.
18 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 210, 214–215.
19 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 246–253.
20 Cf. Chapter 2.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* [*Die Gebeurt der Tragödie*], translated by Ian Johnston (©2003 Blackmask Online, 2000), 14.

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* [*Also sprach Zarathustra*], translated by Thomas Common (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 174.

23 Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh*, translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905), 326: 'How Sam came to see Rostam'.

24 Ferdowsi (1905), 42 ('Introduction').

25 The Avesta is the fundamental collection of religious texts of the ancient Persian religion, Mazdeism.

26 Antonino Pagliaro and Alessandro Bausani, *La letteratura persiana* (Florence-Milan: Sansoni-Accademia, 1968), 368.

27 Pagliaro and Bausani (1968), 380.

28 The faith in the resurrection of bodies is one of the fundamental elements of the faith according to the orthodox Ash'arite theology, cf. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād min al-I'tiqād* [*The Right Means in Belief*] (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1983), 6.

29 Persian text: 'Omar Khayyām, *Robā'iyāt*, edited by Arthur J. Arberry, *The Robā'iyāt of 'Omar Khayyām* (London: Emery Walker, 1949), edited from a ms. dated 658 (1259–1260) in the possession of A. Chester Beatty Esq.

30 'Omar Khayyām, *Robā'iyāt*, translated by Alessandro Bausani, *Quartine* (Torino: Einaudi, 1956), xix–xx.

31 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 371–372.

32 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 421.

33 Samir Amin, *Le développement inégal: Essai sur les formations sociales du capitalisme périphérique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973); and Amin, *L'Eurocentrisme: Critique d'une idéologie* (Paris: Anthropos economica, 1988). From a global history perspective, this author explores even further the comparison between China, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East in premodern times in *Le monde arabe dans la longue durée: Le printemps arabe?* (Paris: Le Temps des cerises, 2015).

34 Georges Corm, *Pensée et politique dans le monde arabe: Contextes historiques et problématiques XIXe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015).

35 The expression comes from Alfred Louis Kroeber, 'Stimulus Diffusion', in *American Anthropologist* New Series 42(1) (January–March 1940): 1–20.

36 Needham (1954), 244.

37 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983).

38 Lao-Tsu, Tao Te Ching, translated by James Legge, *The Tao Teh King, or The Tao and its Characteristics* (s.l.: s.n., 1891). The same passage is quoted by Jullien (1991), 36, referring to Lao-tzeu, *La Voie et sa vertu: Tao-tê-king*, translated by François Houang and Pierre Leyris (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 89.

39 Jullien (1991), 36.

40 The same opinion is shared by Anne Chang, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

41 This tripartition was proposed by Bausani, in a controversy with Henri Corbin and Hossein Nasr, who tended to reduce Islam to its Gnostic and mystical dimension in Alessandro Bausani, *L'Enciclopedia dei Fratelli della Purità* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1978), 21–22, where there is a reference to Bausani, 'Cosmologia e religione nell'Islam' *Scientia* (1973): 1–24.

42 Alessandro Bausani, 'Per una letteratura comparata delle lingue islamiche', in *Atti del terzo Convegno di Studi Arabi e Islamici* (Naples: Istituto Universitario orientale, 1967), 145–156.

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This is what Nietzsche has to do with Ibn Khaldūn. A materialist and rationalist historian, Ibn Khaldūn wants to explain everything, even how poetic composition takes place. And he explains it by drawing on all the instruments his culture puts at his disposal. Among these, the most useful and efficient in this specific field are the reflections developed by Muslim philosophers, and in particular those like al-Fārābī and Avicenna, profoundly influenced by Neoplatonism, its psychology and its aesthetics.

Notes

1 It is the period to which the historian, Aḥmad Amīn, exponent of the *Nahḍa* (modern Arab cultural Renaissance) devoted the book *Fajr al-Islām* [*The Dawn of Islam*], the first of eight volumes dedicated to Islamic civilisation; Aḥmad Amīn, *Fajr al-Islām*, Vols I–VIII (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Iʿtimād, 1929).
2 *Al-Qurʾān*, translated by Alessandro Bausani, *Il Corano* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1992), lxv; hereafter quoted as Bausani (1992).
3 Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *Fī al-shiʿr al-jāhilī* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ilmiyya, 1926), 15.
4 Bausani (1992), lxii.
5 Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), originally published in 1888.
6 Qurʾān, *Isrāʾ*, *The Night Journey*, 17:1.
7 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. I, 184.
8 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967. Reprint 1980), Vol. I, 206.
9 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 383.
10 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 437.
11 'Khuṭbat al-nabī fī ḥujjat al-widāʾ', in *An Anthology of Arabic Literature, Culture, and Thought from Pre-Islamic Times to the Present*, edited by Bassam K. Frangieh (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 466–468. Source: *Majmūʿa al-wathaʾiq al-siyāsiya li al-ʿahd al-nabawī wa al-khilāfa al-rāshida*, edited by Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾism, 1987), 362–360.
12 'Shaʾnuhā ka-shaʾn al-ṣalā', Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 383; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 436.
13 Anarchy here refers to the etymological meaning of 'absence of political authority', and not the pejorative meaning of chaos.
14 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 368.
15 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 419.
16 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 231–232.
17 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 268.
18 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 384.
19 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 437.
20 Majakovskij, 'Good!' ['*Horošo!*'] (1927), *Bene!, e poema di Lenin*, translated by M. de Micheli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1958).
21 Cf. note 23 in the Preface: Vladimir Maïakovski, *Poèmes 1924–1926*, translation by Claude Frioux (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 5.
22 For a brilliant synthesis of the history of Russia in the context of the history of European civilisations, cf. Fernand Braudel, *Le monde actuel*, I (Paris: Librairie classique Eugène Belin, 1963).
23 Giovanna Spendel, *Storia della letteratura russa* (Rome: Newton, 1996), 63.

24 The Sudanese theologian Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭaha (d. 1985), during his trial in 1985, addressed a striking similar criticism to the 'Islamic laws' imposed by the Sudanese government in 1983. These laws, he said, have the purpose of submitting (*istikāna*), terrorising (*irhāb*) and humiliating (*idhlāl*) the people and threatened the national unity of the country.

25 Mikhā'īl Nuʿayma, *Sabʿūn: Ḥikāyat ʿumr* [*Seventy: The Story of my Life*], Vols 1–3. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1959–1960), 404–405. Cf. Francesco Gabrieli, 'L'esperienza russa di Nuàima', in *Cultura araba del Novecento* (Milan: Laterza, 1983), 115–125.

26 Alessandro Bausani, *Persia religiosa: Da Zaratustra a Bahā'u'hllāh* (Cosenza: Giordano Editore, 1959), 152.

27 Aristotle, *Perì Psychēs*, translated by Giancarlo Movia, *L'Anima* with a parallel translation of the Greek text (Milan: Rusconi, 1996).

28 A letter from Friedrich Schiller to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1796, cited by Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* [*Die Gebeurt der Tragödie*], translated by Ian Johnston (©2003 Blackmask Online, 2000), 21.

29 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 178.

30 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 199.

31 The intelligibles (*ta noētá* in Aristotle's *Psychology*, *al-maʿqūlāt* in the Arab-Islamic philosophers) are the concepts of things devoid of their sensual matter and understood by the intellect.

32 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 293–294.

33 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, (1980), Vol. III, 338.

34 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 329.

35 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 375.

36 Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), vi; and Muḥammad Ibn Sallām Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shuʿarā'* [*Classes of Poets*], edited by M. Shākir (Cairo, 1952).

37 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 329–330.

38 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 375–376.

39 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 334.

40 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 380–381.

41 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 344–345.

42 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 391–392.

43 Geert J.H. van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 172.

44 For example, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām bayna al-ʿilm wa al-madaniyya* (*Islam between Science and Civilisation*) (Cairo: Kalimāt ʿarabiyya li al-tarjama wa al-nashr, 2011), 121.

45 When speaking of poetry and meaning 'to imitate', Ibn Khaldūn does not use the term *ḥākā* ('to imitate, to represent in words') as he does with regard to dreams and psychology, but *ḥadhā* which literally means to walk in someone's footsteps, and thus fits both the first sense of *asālīb* (lit. 'paths') and the sense of *qālib* (mould). Avicenna and Averroes in their comments on Aristotelian *Poetics* render the Greek *mímēsis* with *muḥākā* (verbal representation) and *takhyīl* (imaginative representation), Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-shiʿr*, edited by Charles E. Butterworth and Ahmad Abd al-Magid Haridi (Cairo: The General Egyptian Book Organization, 1986); Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-shiʿr*, translated by Ismail M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

46 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 188–190.

47 Collection of *ḥadīth*, acts and words of the Prophet, by Bukhārī, completed around 846.

48 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 211–212.

49 Among whom, apparently, Alexander of Aphrodisia (fl. 200 bce), Dahiyat (1974), 13.

50 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, edited by Salvatore Russo, *A.G. Baumgarten: L'Estetica*, translated by Francesco Caparrota, Anna Li Vigni and Salvatore Tedesco (Palermo: Aesthetica edizioni, 2000).

51 Dahiyat (1974), 62–63. On poetic syllogism as imaginative syllogism, cf. also Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, translated by Shams Constantine Inati, *Avicenna: Remarks and Admonitions* (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1984), 149; Arabic text: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhat*, edited by Sulīmān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1960), 511–513.

52 [Ibn Rushd] Averroes, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa taqrīr mā bayna al-sharī ʿa wa al-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*, translated by Marc Geoffroy, Averroës. *Discours décisif* (Paris, Flammarion, 1996), 118–122. This reference was mentioned in Chapter 3, note 12.

53 The Prophet.

54 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 171.

55 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 192.

56 Gustave E. von Grunebaum, 'Iʿjāz', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, III, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 1018–1020.

57 On this subject, cf. Giovanna Lelli, 'Il commento medio di Averroè alla Poetica aristotelica. Elementi di poetica medievale comparata arabo-islamica e latino-cristiana', in Carmela Baffioni (ed.), *Averroes and the Aristotelian Heritage* (Naples: Guida, 2004), 175–188.

58 The Qur'ānic verse in question is The Confederates, Al-Aḥzāb, 33:6 [Ibn Rushd] Averroè *Talkhīṣ kitab al-shi'r*, translated by Carmela Baffioni, *Commento al Perì Poietikēs* (Milan: Coliseum 1990), 170–171. Arabic text [Ibn Rushd] (1986), 54–55.

59 The Prophet has forged the Qur'ān.

60 Qur'ān, The Armies, al-Zumar, 39:23. For the interpretation of '*kitāban mutashābihan*' and '*mathānī*', cf. Bausani (1992), 641.

61 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 322.

62 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 368.

63 Chapter 2, n. 24; Chapter 5.

64 Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Anchor Books, 1973), n.p.. Greek text: *Repubblica*, translated by Francesco Gabrielli (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981), 607a, 348f.

65 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 294.

66 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 338–339.

67 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 350: ارصف مبانى.

68 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 350.

69 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 397–398.

70 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 348–349.

71 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 396.

72 Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: A Philosophical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury Academy, 2016), 34–35.

73 Ernest Robert Curtius, 'Poesia e teologia' ['Poetry and Theology'], in Ernest Robert Curtius, *Letteratura europea e Medio Evo latino* (Rome: La Nuova Italia, 1995), 239–253.

74 Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), 200–201.

75 Eco (1982), 201, refers to Ibn Sīnā, *Al-ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt* [*Remarks and Admonitions*]. We intend the term 'Orientalist' in the traditional and broad sense of a scholar of Arab and Islamic studies.

76 For more on Baumgarten's definition of aesthetics as an inferior gnoseology, see Preface.

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sciences, concerning the future life, as the social sciences like history. Only a few years before the publication of the book by al-Kawākibī, the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn had begun to circulate in the Arab world again.[36]

The aesthetic State will last for a long time. It will survive the advent of capitalism (eighteenth century) and its ideology which presents goods as fetishes instead of as labour and the social relationships that that entails. For a long time yet, the State will need to show off not only its magnificence and luxury but also the authentic beauty of the arts, in all their forms (painting, sculpture, architecture, music and literature). Only in the last decades of the twentieth century does the State no longer seem to need beauty to legitimatise itself.

Notes

1 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, edited by Etienne Quatremère, *Prolégomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Vols I–III (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970 [1858]), Vol. II, 383.

2 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vols I–III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1967]), Vol. II, 434.

3 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 382.

4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 432–433.

5 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 107.

6 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 117–118.

7 Georges Corm, *Pensée et politique dans le monde arabe: Contextes historiques et problématiques XIXe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015).

8 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 410–411; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 468–469.

9 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. III, 31; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. III, 38.

10 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād min al-I'tiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1983), 63. For an exposition on the atomistic speculative physics of the *Kalām*, cf. al-Bāqillānī (950–1013), *Kitāb al-tamhīd* [Introduction], edited by P.R.J McCarthy (Beirut: s.n., 1957).

11 Giacomo Leopardi, *Canti* (Milan: Mursia, 1977), Canto XXVIII, 166:

> Or poserai per sempre,
> stanco mio cor. Perì l'inganno estremo,
> Ch'eterno io mi credei. Perì. Ben sento,
> in noi di cari inganni,
> non che la speme, il desiderio è spento.
> Posa per sempre. Assai
> palpitasti. Non val cosa nessuna
> i moti tuoi, né di sospiri è degna
> la terra. Amaro e noia
> la vita, altro mai nulla; e fango è il mondo.
> T'acqueta omai. Dispera
> l'ultima volta. Al gener nostro il fato
> non donò che il morire. Omai disprezza
> te, la natura, il brutto
> poter che, ascoso, a comun danno impera,
> E l'infinita vanità del tutto.

12 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 254–255.

13 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 290–291.

14 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 236.

15 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, Book One: *The Process of Production of Capital*, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Marxist Internet archive, 1995, 1999), n.p., based on edition by Fredrick Engels (1887, German edition 1867, Moscow: Progress Publisher, n.d.), n.p.

16 Samir Amin, *L'eurocentrisme: Critique d'une idéologie* (Paris: Anthropos economica, 1988), 15.

17 [Faraj Fawda] Farag Foda, *Al-ḥaqīqa al-ghā'iba* [*Absent Truth*] (Cairo: s.n., 1986). In this work, the author questions the political-religious legitimacy of the caliphate and the 'Islamic State' on the basis of a historical and sociological analysis. He himself was assassinated by a jihadi in 1992, after having been declared blasphemous by the religious authorities of the al-Azhar university.

18 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād min al-I'tiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1983), 147ff. Alessandro Bausani, *L'Islam* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987), 32.

19 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 113; cf. Chapter 2.

20 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 230–231.

21 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 259–260.

22 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. I, 339–340.

23 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. I, 382–383.

24 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 41–42.

25 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 47.

26 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 44.

27 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 50.

28 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 42–43.

29 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 48–50

30 Al-Qur'ān, *al-Zumar* [*The Armies*], 39:23; these verses cwere ited in Chapter 6.

31 The Qur'ānic terms for the throne of God are *kursī* (it is found with reference to God only in the *sūra* of *Baqara* [The Cow], 2:255) and *'arsh* (*al-A'rāf* [*The Battlements*], 7:54, several references).

32 Sa'di, *Golestān*, in *Kolliyāt-e Sa'di*, edited by Moḥammad 'Ali Forughi (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Rahā, *c*. 1374/1996), 28.

33 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 57.

34 Ibn Khaldūn (1980), Vol. II, 65.

35 Ibn Khaldūn (1970), Vol. II, 63; and Ibn Khaldūn (1980) Vol. II, 71.

36 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, *De la nature du despotisme et de la fin de l'esclavage* (Paris: Dār Albouraq, 2017); and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, *Ṭabāí'al-istibdād wa maṭābi 'al-isti'bād* (Cairo: Kalimāt 'arabiyya li al-tarjama wa al-nashr, 2011).

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Notes

1 Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982).
2 Jacques Le Goff, *Faut-il vraiment découper l'histoire en tranches?* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).
3 Anne Chang, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

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